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EDITORIALS*

DOES CALIFORNIA NEED A BASIC SCIENCE (QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE) LAW?

Basic Science Legislation Is of Recent Origin.—In 1925, after a somewhat unfortunate experience with low standard healing art licensure groups, the State of Connecticut passed the first of what are now called basic science laws. Minnesota, Nebraska, Washington, Wisconsin, and a number of other states soon adopted similar legislation. In California a special committee, which came into existence through a resolution passed by the California Medical Association Council on September 28, 1929, suggested in several of its reports dealing with a proposed basic science law that a better name for such a law might be to call it a "Qualifying Certificate Act."[†]

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The Object and Scope of Basic Science (Qualifying Certificate) Laws.—The object of basic science or qualifying certificate laws is to make certain that every person desiring to be licensed by a State shall possess, in addition to purely pro-

* Editorials on subjects of scientific and clinical interest, contributed by members of the California Medical Association, are printed in the Editorial Comments column, which follows.

[†] References to reports made by this committee, and published in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, are printed on Page 211.

fessional qualifications, certain other basic education before being entitled to take an examination leading to the practice of any form of healing art. Such a law is made applicable to all healing art schools and examining boards, both of the regular or nonsectarian profession, and of cultist or sectarian practice.

The so-called basic education or qualifications include, usually, four to eight primary or fundamental subjects, such as anatomy, physiology, chemistry, biology, hygiene, bacteriology, pathology, and diagnosis. Our California committee several years ago, after much discussion, came to the conclusion that such a basic science or qualifying certificate law would fully serve its purpose, and, if proposed on an initiative ballot, would not only meet with less opposition, but be more appealing to the electorate, if there was practically no mention made of subjects such as bacteriology, pathology, and diagnosis, the inclusion of which would permit low standard groups, through specious argument, to becloud the issues.

The subjects which were tentatively agreed upon by the California committee were: English, anatomy, physiology, chemistry, and biology. The insertion of English was deemed proper on the ground that persons seeking licenses as practitioners in California should be able to speak the language of the citizens with at least fair facility and correctness. It was felt that lay opinion at large would support the committee's viewpoint that the other four subjects (anatomy, physiology, chemistry, and biology) while of primary importance for basic education in all schools of the healing art, could also be claimed to be essentially nonpartisan to any group and, therefore, less controversial.

The amount of education demanded in each of the said five subjects would be of the standard laid down for graduates of four-year high school courses who seek admission to courses in liberal arts colleges. There would be no stipulation as to when and where the education in these subjects had been acquired, but every person submitting such a basic science or qualifying certificate to a healing art board would be required to be at least twenty-one years of age. That would prevent every such board from granting a license to practice to any applicant for licensure who was under the age of twenty-one.

* * *

Complexion of the Examining Board.—Since in matters of this nature members of sectarian and cultist groups are prone to raise a hue and cry with a slogan such as "domination by the medical trust," it is desirable, and perhaps necessary, that a basic science or qualifying certificate board should be composed of members having no places on medical faculties. The California Medical Association committee suggested that a board of five members be appointed by the Governor of California, one each from the following institutions: the University of California, Stanford University, Santa Clara University, University of Southern California, and the California Institute of Technology. The presidents or executive heads of the institutions named would each